



MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

WORKFORCE EDITION

A DEEP DIVE INTO THE RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND RESILIENCE OF BUILDING THE MUSIC MANAGEMENT WORKFORCE



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, part of the “Managing Expectations” series by the MMF (Music Managers Forum), dives deep into the experiences and challenges faced by music managers. It explores workforce demographics, the challenges and rewards of music management as a career, and offers insights and best practices for building and retaining a skilled workforce.

KEY FINDINGS

Workforce demographics: The music management sector is heavily reliant on self-employed individuals and freelancers, with 90% of survey respondents identifying as such.

CHALLENGES

Sustainability: A significant drop in managers remaining in the field after five years suggests difficulty sustaining a career.

Income: A large portion (61%) of managers who responded to the survey do not earn minimum wage, and only 17% earn over £50,000.

Gender pay gap: only 22% of women in management earn over £30,000 compared to 29.6% of men.

Limited support: Only 6% of respondents contribute to private pensions, and there are limited opportunities for part-time work.

Skills gap: A decline in apprenticeships and internships indicates a potential future skills gap.

Job insecurity: Managers are employed by their clients. They can spend years developing talent without the benefit of a safety net.

REWARDS

Job satisfaction: The opportunity to work with artists and develop careers can be highly rewarding.

Flexibility: Remote working and freelance opportunities offer flexibility in work arrangements.

Growth potential: The industry is constantly evolving, offering opportunities for career development and innovation.

INSIGHTS FROM INDUSTRY LEADERS

The report also features interviews with leaders from several music management companies. They share their experiences in areas including:

Building and retaining a workforce:

Importance of clear job descriptions, cultural fit, and providing development opportunities.

Working with freelancers: Establishing clear communication, setting expectations, and ensuring timely payment.

The role of the MMF: Providing training, resources, and advocacy for music managers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report concludes with recommendations for various stakeholders:

Music management companies: Invest in training and development for staff, consider offering part-time work options, and explore innovative financing models.

Industry bodies: Advocate for better industry practices such as timely payments and standard contracts.

Government: Provide support for apprenticeships and training programmes in music management.

Overall, the report highlights the need for a multi-pronged approach to address the challenges faced by the music management workforce. By investing in training, development, and creating a more sustainable career path, the industry can ensure a future with a skilled and vibrant workforce.

INTRODUCTION

The Music Managers Forum is the world's largest community of professional music managers with a UK membership of over 1,500 - ranging from UK-based global businesses that represent some of world's most successful artists and creative talent, through to emerging managers taking their first steps in the business.

Within the music industry, the role of the music manager has become increasingly important, especially as artists, songwriters and other music makers have seized opportunities to develop and run their own self-contained businesses. This has greatly expanded the responsibilities and workload of the manager, although the structural barriers to developing a sustainable management company are often overlooked. This report will look to highlight these issues in more detail.

Through our members' input, we fully understand the challenges that many, and perhaps the majority, of managers face - whether that's the fundamental pressures of business like sustaining an income, budgeting, cash flow and taxes, or the more psychological aspects of the role, such as job security, maintaining relationships, and protecting your mental health.

In general, an estimated 28% of all new UK businesses fail in their first year. However, even within the music industry, music management remains a unique and sometimes precarious profession. Many managers will work unpaid for the first few years out of determination, passion, belief and reliance. The role straddles the personal and the professional, and, until they are in a position to bring in outside expertise, there is an expectation for managers to oversee all aspects of their client's careers.

Similarly, the tendency for managers to make early and long-term investments in their clients, including direct financial investment, was explored in previous editions of Managing Expectations. However, the sustainability of such a model might now have to be questioned. For the first time since our survey began (in 2019), we are now seeing a significant 8% drop in managers building careers between one and five years. Such a trend suggests that greater early career support is needed. These early career managers are working across multiple time zones, platforms, and cultures, but investing and developing a business model to support a sustained workforce is increasingly hard. As managers pivot towards earning from long term relationships across multiple income streams, rather than from an industry model based on advanced investment, more support is needed.

Our research also reveals several other red flags. For example, only 6% of survey respondents indicated they paid into a private pension, which is significantly below the 24% national average for freelancers and the self-employed. With managers rarely having a long-term stake in their clients' careers or participating in rights ownership, this is one area among many that deserves greater exploration and awareness. Future instalments of Managing Expectations will research the value of music management to better equip music managers in articulating their value for both direct investment and terms.

But fundamentally we want this report to help and benefit our membership, by providing guidance on the key considerations needed to recruit, retain, and develop a workforce in the context of a music business that is increasingly globalised and bureaucratic, where artistic independence is opening new commercial opportunities, and that new technologies (such as AI) are continuing to disrupt.

Importantly, that includes the policies and ethics to consider when growing your company. We have therefore included advice and signposting on inclusion, accessibility and adjustments you may need to consider to attract and retain a diverse and relevant workforce.

SURVEY AND REPORT METHODOLOGY

Every year the MMF surveys our membership to understand the challenges facing music managers. Thank you to the 176 managers who completed the survey to give a wide range of perspectives and insights. In 2023, we focused the survey on the workforce (e.g. the issues facing managers as businesses/employers). Thanks also to the management companies that provided insights into their business: Red Light Management, Finesse Foreva, VD Music, Mañana Music, Eleven Music Management, Westwick Management, Future History Management, and Tape Music Company. The interviewees were intentionally selected to give an insight into different scales and business models of management companies with a track record of building workforces across the UK. This report aims to support all members and employees in building a stronger workforce environment and use the findings to start discussions and find common themes across the management profession.

Report authored by Paul Bonham, Annabella Coldrick, and Adam Webb.

The full data findings from this and all our previous editions of Managing Expectations can be found at:

<https://themmaf.net/managingexpectations/>

The key findings are:

WORK

NEW WORKFORCE

39% have been in management 1-5 years indicating lots of people taking up the role. However between 2021 and 2023 there was a 13% drop in people entering the role.

LIMITED CAPACITY TO DEVELOP NEW WORKFORCE

Since 2019 Apprenticeships have fallen significantly with very few companies indicating they had been able to offer these roles in 2023. There are 50% fewer internships on offer in 2023 than in 2019.

MORE EXPERIENCE

Since 2019 there has been a 5% increase in managers with more than 10 years experience.

INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR PART TIME

Since 2019 there has been an 8% decrease in those running their own companies part-time to 12% and only 1% have permanent part-time employment.

MINIMUM REWARD

61% of managers do not receive the average national minimum wage (approx £20,000). 60% work full time hours. 41% work over a 40 hour week.

GENDER PAY GAP

22% of women in management earn over £30,000 compared to 29.6% of men.

OPPORTUNITY FOR HIGHER EARNINGS

17% earn over £50,000. Median gross annual earnings for full-time employees was £34,963 in April 2023.

COMPANY DEVELOPMENT

INVESTMENT IN CURRENT WORKFORCE

Since 2019 there was a 30% increase in management companies investing between £2,500-£5,000 in skills development and training for staff.

REPAYABLE LOANS

5% are now accessing repayable loans, a significant increase since 2019.

GRANTS

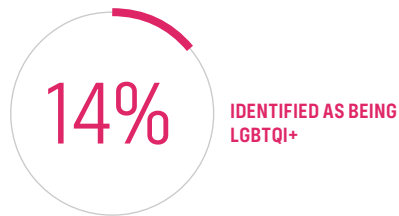
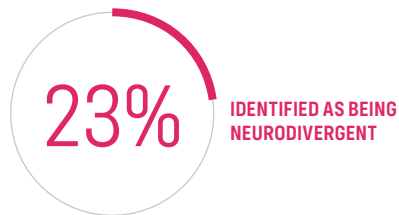
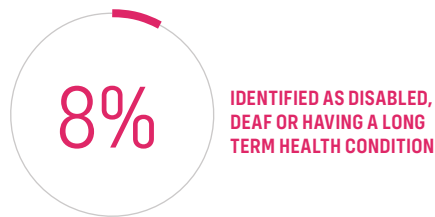
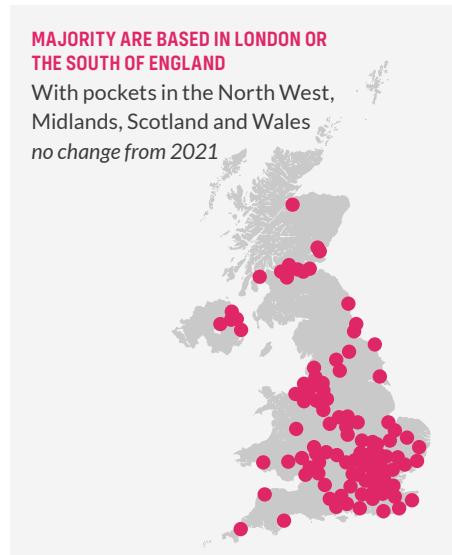
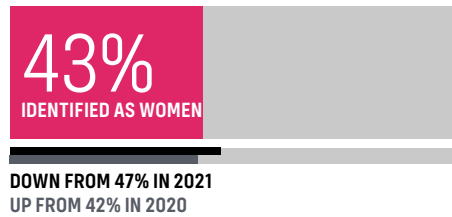
17% are now benefitting from grants from charities and fund a 100% increase since 2019 to develop their businesses. A further 9% of respondents have received MMF Accelerator support.

VENTURE CAPITAL

Remains a challenge with 2% accessing this type of finance.

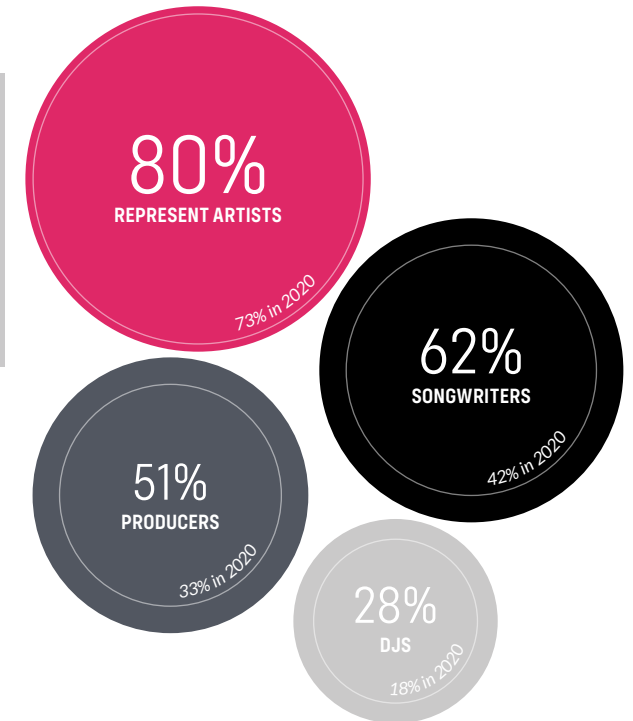
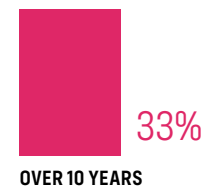
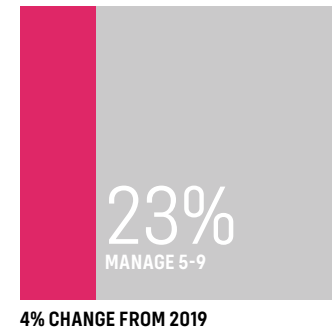
KEY FINDINGS

WHO ARE MUSIC MANAGERS?



WHO DO THEY REPRESENT?

Most manage 1 or 2 clients... however



GENRES



LONG TERM INCOME SECURITY

SKILLS

ACROSS FIVE YEARS OF MANAGING EXPECTATIONS, RESPONDENTS IDENTIFIED THE KEY SKILLS MANAGERS NEEDED

TOP 5 2019-23

1. Managing vulnerability, health and or wellbeing artists
2. Legal and contractual negotiation skills
3. Accounting and financial planning
4. Marketing
5. Live events and tour management

TASKS DONE



DOWN FROM 87% 2021

73% FROM 2021



UP FROM 69%

NO CHANGE FROM 2019



UP FROM 8% IN 2021

DOWN FROM 16% IN 2020



EMPLOYMENT

72%
OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS DO NOT MAKE CONTRIBUTIONS TO A PENSION OUTSIDE OF NATIONAL INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS OR AN EMPLOYERS PENSION SCHEME.

52%
HAVE A POST TERM COMMISSION OR SUNSET AGREEMENT IN PLACE

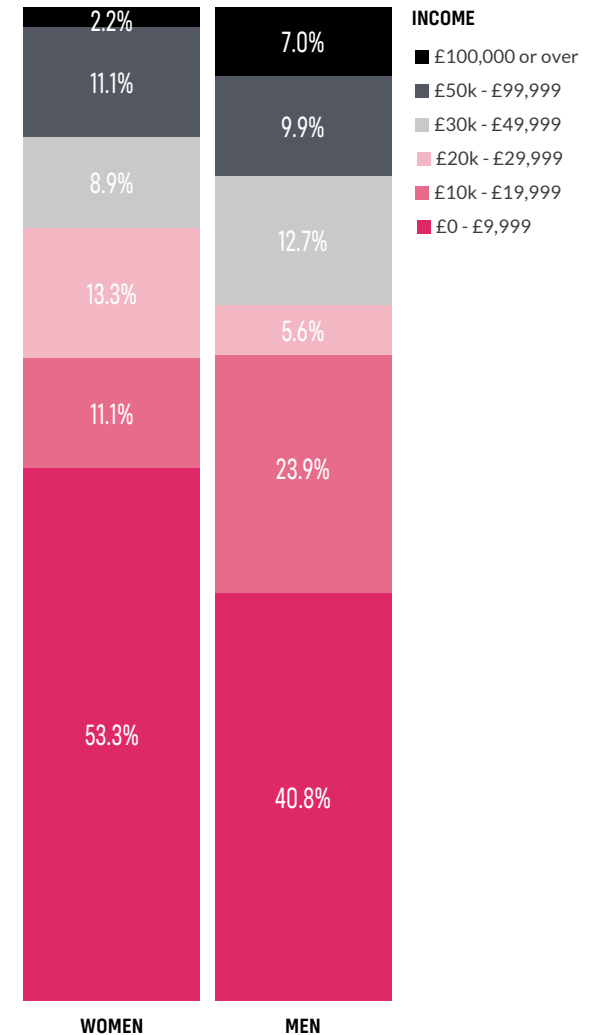
"Lawyers love to challenge the very notion of post term commission so it is, more often than not, a battle"

"It's a difficult conversation and lawyers are cutting down both the rates and the sunset clause length"

39%
WORK OVER A 40 HOUR WEEK ON MUSIC MANAGEMENT

24%
EARN OVER £30K WITH 12% EARNING NOTHING YET

73%
ARE PAID ON COMMISSION



ENDING WORKING RELATIONSHIPS, DISPUTE RESOLUTION & MEDIATION

At some point it's likely professional relationships will come to an end. Whilst the majority of people move through working life with very few, if any, disputes or serious disagreements, they do happen. Small companies carry a high risk of redundancy and clear notice periods should be agreed with employees. If you have employees you must have a company policy to manage grievances or offer ACAS dispute resolution. If there are problems raised with the relationship between yourself and your client, you can access mediation through Help Musicians.

Employees, freelancers and associates often move on from employers or join companies with clients. The MMF Code of Practice states that

“before entering into a management relationship with an artist, make all reasonable efforts to confirm that the artist has fulfilled their legal obligations to the previous manager, if applicable and, if possible, assist them in doing so.”

If disputes are between your business and another business or freelancer, you may want a professional mediator before proceeding any further. The Civil Mediation Council can provide further impartial advice and the subject is explored at length in our Essentials of Music Management publication.

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

<https://www.acas.org.uk/>

Civil Mediation Council

<https://civilmediation.org/>

Help Musicians

<https://www.helpmusicians.org.uk/>

CONCLUSIONS AND ACTIONS FOR MMF

We hope this report provides an insight into the music management workforce as well as some practical advice and guidance for our membership who are seeking to grow and build out their teams, whether by working with freelancers or hiring employees. Overall this research has led to the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Music management companies:** Invest in training and development for staff (such as MMF Essentials of Music Management course, PPL/PRS registration webinars, professional digital skills), consider offering part-time work options, and explore innovative financing models.
- **Industry bodies:** Advocate for better industry practices such as timely payments, standard contracts and stronger support for parents and those on maternity leave, particularly for freelancers.
- **Government:** Advocate for more support for practical apprenticeships and training programmes in music management.
- **MMF workforce growth:** Continue to support membership in business and skills development through our education and professional development programmes.



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